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THE EDITOR

Tolstoi is a great commoner. We may expect that his definition of art will be broad and inclusive. In one place in his book, "What is Art?" he calls it a means of communication between people. More particularly he says, "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others feelings he has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves." No one can object to this definition, except that it may be considered too broad.

**Tolstoi's
"What is
Art"?**

We have always been taught, rightly or otherwise, that knowledge may be either science or art. Science, we learned, was something concrete and measurable, while art was something emotional and not accurately definable. Then art was subdivided into the fine, or beautiful, and the useful arts. Now I am an artist (whatever that is), and metaphysics and philosophical terms are not in my line, but my own desire is to find a definition a little more prescribed and particularized than Tolstoi's. I feel that the fine arts should have a definition, but the necessity of beauty comes in, and we are no nearer a solution, for beauty must of itself be defined. Tolstoi discards beauty altogether as implying gratification or pleasure, and hence as something lowering.

Without beauty, art has to the writer no meaning, and his activity as an artist, a landscape painter, is centered (or ought to be) in interpreting to those who see less clearly the beauty of the natural world.

Beauty, then, to the artist, means the harmonious relation of things in nature that give him pleasure, and because he is a believer in the brotherhood of man he spends his life in interpreting that beauty and harmony so that his brother, occupied in other useful walks of life better fitted for him, may enjoy them also. If he can make him feel that God is good, for nature sings that to the artist's soul, he is an agent in his brother's religious training, also.

Beauty

Tolstoi is a Russian, and, as clearly seen in his novels, has a Russian's idea of woman and beauty. He is unable to separate woman and beauty from fleshly thought. Thank heaven, we can, being Anglo-Saxons with a very different conscience; and we do appreciate woman and beauty, and her beauty without the suggestiveness that is necessarily carnal and degrading. This mental conception of Tolstoi unfits him as an impartial mentor of art for us. It annihilates any just appreciation of the nude, and limits the field of art to subjects that are only either moral or religious.

Art is the handmaid of religion, and art in this regard has its most exalted usefulness, which does not on that account force it from the many other channels of mental activity and enjoyment.

Enjoyment or gratification, he says, should not be the object of art. I can only understand it otherwise. We can only be happy when we enjoy something, the good enjoying the good and the wicked enjoying the bad. The moral man is happy in his contemplation of truth, resulting from his love for truth and his eagerness to find it. An artist has his purest pleasure in bringing his art into existence, while his desire to give others the same pleasure (which may be either religious or debasing according to its kind) is also in his thoughts.

**Definition of
Art**

Art has no motive otherwise, and Tolstoi's definition needs one more clause to complete it for me. Art is a human activity consisting in this: that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others feelings he has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves—what for? For their improvement and gratification. This completes the idea of art by giving it an effect in the receiver; a cause in the artist and an end or use in his improvement and gratification or pleasure. The *use* of art is thus particularized.

Now a word on critics and the art schools so uncompromisingly treated by Tolstoi in chapter XII. These should represent intelligent discrimination and training in the technique of art.

**Artists Born,
Then Made**

It is a trite saying that artists are born, not made. I think it is equally true that artists are born, then made. It is absurd to cut one's self off from the teachings of the past and the experiences of those in similar lines of art in the present. Otherwise, each infant and child and man would begin where every other infant, child, and man began, unassisted by the conflict, study, and experiences of all those who have created the world's sum of knowledge in religion, science, and art. Conceding the inspiration and overruling Providence of a Divine Creator, all that we have of knowledge has been ultimated by human minds. To say that judicious criticism and schools, which mean education, are totally wrong, is preposterous, and would remove us to the level of savages.

Tolstoi has a good deal to say about the decadence of art being brought about by dividing art. It is true that the wealthy classes have done a good deal to kill art appreciation by creating a false standard of taste. They patronize art, not because it means anything to them, but because it has a commercial value.

They buy, not art but names, and with the aid of certain dealers form a fashion and a scale of prices that often bear no relation to the art value of their possessions. Certain works have a value for historic reasons—which may be legitimate, but how many works of art are bought, primarily, because they have an irresistible appeal to the buyer? Very few indeed. If we could remove the speculative ele-

ment, the rich in America would have very few pictures. Take Jean François Millet, for example. His pictures have a strong appeal and preach the sermon of universal brotherhood. Is Millet bought by the rich because his works so sympathetically express their own feelings in the dignity of toil, and perhaps the hopelessness of it—surrounded as they are by wealth, leisure, luxury?

There are two grand divisions of art—art which is popular, that touches the masses; and art which is not, that appeals to the few. Are we not safe in saying that the art that touches the masses is not necessarily the best art, because the masses who judge it know little of what art is, but, being natural-minded, are affected by literal interpretation and material characteristics. As the mind is elevated, the field of gratification is more limited, but the quality of appreciation is equally increased. And so it develops that the more elevated and clearer minds see in art the fewer but the finer things to admire and absorb. Thus we may conclude: The very most and ideally cultivated mind stands alone on the cone that serves Tolstoi for an illustration, but with an interpretation totally different.

Science and
Art

He says (p. 150): "The path on which art has traveled is like laying on a circle of large diameter, circles of even less and less diameter; so that a cone is formed, whose apex ceases to be a circle. This is what has happened to the art of our time."

I read it differently. The mind at the top sees all below, but the lowest mind sees only those things on its own level.

Great art should reach from the top to the bottom. It should give not only enjoyment to the brightest minds, but in its own degree to those on the lower levels, until it takes in the naturally and corporally minded at the bottom, on which the superstructure of development rests. Some artists, Whistler, for example, speak to the cultivated, but mean little to the masses who have not reached his plane of art. The French peasant painter, Millet, again, perhaps touches all the chords of feeling from the simple mind of the laborer to the philosophic mind of the thinker. To my idea, the greatest art is that which has the greatest appeal to the most varied degrees of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. It should reach not only from the top to the bottom, but also from the bottom to the top.

Great Art is
Inclusive

Tolstoi joins art with religion, and his judges are the masses. Are the broadest, simplest truths of religion easily understood and lived by the masses? These truths are simple, clear, self-evident, but their hardness of heart will not allow clear understanding. Divine truth descends from the Lord above to the lowliest mortal on earth; and regeneration is affected by that lowly soul slowly rising from the conceptions of the corporeal, through the natural moral to the spiritual, and even to a celestial understanding of this same truth which remains the same, but is ever unfolding to new beauty, breadth, and power. It is the same with art. If good art, it, too, has its

Art and Reli-
gion

levels, but is greatest, completest when it rises—is regenerated from matter to spirit. The greater should include the less, and art that does not include the less is incomplete and is an art of the classes and not also of the masses. If reversed it is equally incomplete. An aristocracy of the masses is just as disorderly and socially wrong as an aristocracy of the classes. We must be careful of our divisions, for the aristocratic classes are not necessarily artistic nor the masses necessarily inartistic. Many of our greatest artists have sprung from the lowliest origin. Our classification should distinguish between those minds who appreciate art, and those who do not wherever they may be found. It is because of this that most artists are socialists and disregard the conventional classifications of society. Their aristocracy is one of sentiment and appreciation, not of wealth or social position. Artists are the truest of democrats.

Tolstoi's idea of art is more moral than æsthetic (save the word), and is confusing. Art has its own field, and has a *relation* to morals only. Artists should not preach morals, but beauty. Morals are within the rightful province of the Church, and should be taught there. Good art may be secular as well as religious, which Tolstoi will not allow, and in our materialistic and commercial age we may produce good art on these planes which will have a more universal appeal than if religious. This state of affairs, although deplorable, cannot be denied.

Lack of Religious Art

The sincerity of Tolstoi's declarations are very stimulating, and the loftiness of his ethical and religious position is as inspiring as it is true. Religion marks the real condition of a race, and art that reflects it is the most important index of its condition. The lack of any religious art at the end of our century is a sure indication of our lamentable spiritual condition. Religious activity only will mark the revival of a better art, a hope that finds its fruition in a future too distant for prophetic eye to read.

Ours is the age of science, and what art we have reflects the spirit of the age in a technical knowledge which far surpasses all that the world has seen before. With this splendid knowledge for a foundation, let us build a superstructure that will some day combine idea with fact, combine soul with body, and that shall be the very crown of art itself, jeweled with both truth and beauty.

The establishment of "social teas" in connection with the Sargent exhibition in Boston has proved singularly successful; nay, the Boston *Transcript* goes so far as to describe the teas as more popular than the paintings. A few days ago an additional attraction in the shape of Ian Maclaren was offered without extra charge. The Reverend Doctor didn't turn up, but a thousand expectant visitors did, and, after having partaken of many cups of tea, they were too good-natured to demand their money back.